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**U.S. Representative**

***John Spratt***

South Carolina ■ 5th District

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**News Release**

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**Spratt Says S.C. Would Benefit  
From Land Conservation Funding Bill**

*Congressman worked to ensure automatic funding for conservation*

**WASHINGTON — U.S. Rep. John Spratt (D-SC) hailed a bill passed today by the House that will bolster funding of land conservation programs and benefit parks and recreation in South Carolina. Spratt, the Ranking Member of the House Budget Committee, helped work out provisions of the bill that make funding automatic for the bill's conservation programs.**

“This bill earmarks a guaranteed source of funds for land conservation programs,” said Spratt. “Last year, 30 cities and towns in South Carolina applied for grants to develop local parks and recreational facilities. All 30 could not be funded. Had this bill been law, they might have been. This bill will funnel \$27 million a year into South Carolina for these purposes, or \$135 million over the next five years.”

The bipartisan legislation that passed the House today, H.R. 701, sets aside \$2.8 billion a year from royalties the government derives from offshore oil and gas drilling. The funds go into a trust fund that will be spent each year to purchase environmentally sensitive land and fund other conservation projects.

“These funds will be made available automatically,” said Spratt. “They cannot be diverted to other purposes and they will not be subject to yearly appropriations by Congress.”

Spratt won praise for his work on the bill from the co-author of the legislation, Rep. George Miller (D-CA), Ranking Member of the House Resources Committee.

“John Spratt deserves credit for his leadership on this bill,” Miller said. “As the top Democrat on the Budget Committee, he helped us hammer out the provisions that guarantee annual payments. These provisions are a great addition to the bill, and they helped us pass it.”

Spratt said if the bill becomes law, it will be a big plus for South Carolina. For example, the

bill would:

- provide nearly \$8 million in the Land and Water Conservation Fund for grants to support local recreation projects, such as parks now under development in Pageland, Hartsville, Rock Hill, and Fort Mill.
- enable the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to identify lands and wildlife in need of protection; identify the best areas for commercial development; and protect green space from sprawl. York, Rock Hill, and other cities have asked DNR for survey assistance, but the department currently lacks the funding for such projects.
- fund school programs on natural areas and preservation.
- preserve hunting grounds in the upstate, and expand public access to wildlife facilities.
- help establish buffers to preserve water quality and wildlife on the Wateree and Catawba rivers.
- provide the following estimated funding levels for these programs in S.C.:

Coastal Plain Preservation	\$9.1 million
Land and Water Conservation Projects	\$7.9 million
Wildlife	\$4.4 million
Urban Parks and Recreation	\$673,741
Historic Preservation	\$1.8 million
Lands Restoration	\$692,352
Landscape & Endangered Species	\$762,583
General	\$1.3 million

Spratt stressed that the bill is not into “land grabs” but is about preservation and protection. “The South Department of Natural Resources has a written policy against condemnations where the owner is unwilling to sell. DNR will only acquire land when the seller is willing, and DNR prefers to keep land in private hands by working with owners who want to preserve their property. Land owners often approach DNR for help with preservation, which DNR cannot always provide with current funding,” he said.

“This bill helps cities, towns, and the environment all over South Carolina,” said Spratt, “and I was pleased to help get it through the House with a strong vote of support.”

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